

**REMARKS**

Claims 1 through 5 remain pending in this application. In response to the non-final Office Action dated September 13, 2005, claims 1 through 5 have been amended. Care has been taken to avoid the addition of new matter. A petition for one month extension of the period for response, with appropriate fee charge authorization, is filed herewith in a separate paper.

Claims 1 and 5 have been rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 for indefiniteness. In response claims 1 and 5 have been amended to clarify “evaluation . . . input means” and the “design change evaluation delivery means” of these claims. As described in the specification beginning at page 7, the evaluation input means applies proposed design change data as a target for evaluation. The design change evaluation delivery means outputs an evaluation based case data accumulated in the database. The evaluation can then be displayed to the user. The claims have been amended to clearly recite these features as well as to make further clarifications. Claims 2 through 4 have been amended for consistency with these changes and for further clarification. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully solicited.

Claims 1 through 5 have been further rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. patent 6,871,182 (Winnard). In response, the claims have been further amended. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

According to the present invention, the correlations or relationships between the costs of pre-existing design changes, and also to performances relating thereto, are input in the form of a rule table and stored as case data in a database or accumulated within a network. The case data can be used to calculate out the costs and performances from the experiences of the past, when an unknown content of a proposed design change is input into the network, upon the basis of those accumulated relationships or correlations. The claimed system assists the engineer or

designer who are actually designing a product to estimate the influences caused by changes of design. Proposed design changes are applied as target data for evaluation based on the case data.

Winnard does not disclose each of the claimed features. Winnard discloses an engineering change decision analysis system and method thereof, in particular, relating to a car manufacturing. The Winnard tool collects various kinds of information from users of the cars, i.e., drivers, so as to decide on whether such the design change should be done or not. That is, a decision is enabled in Winnard on the basis of user feedback, not on calculations based on stored considerations including cost of individual changes. Winnard does not disclose rule tables for storing or accumulating the correlations or relationships between the costs occurring and the design change in the past, and also the performances relating thereto, as required by the claims 1 through 5.

The invention required by dependent claims 3 and 4 functions to apprise the user of which kind or what contents of design change is/are preferable for accomplishing the object when the user inputs as a target a preferred cost and/or the target values of performance parameters. Such claimed feature is not disclosed or suggested by Winnard.


Accordingly, it is submitted that claims 1 through 5 are patentably distinct. Withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the application are respectfully solicited. To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of

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time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gene Z. Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

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